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CHURCH QUESTIONS

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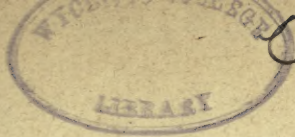
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CHURCH QUESTIONS

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CHURCH QUESTIONS

THE SUBSTANCE OF SERMONS PREACHED IN
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH PADDINGTON

BY
GILBERT SPARSHOTT KARNEY, M.A.
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CHURCH QUESTIONS

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
THE CHURCH OF IRELAND
THE CHURCH OF WALES

ALL THE CHURCHES OF THE KINGDOM

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To
MY BELOVED CONGREGATION

"The Bishop.

"Will you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word . . . ?

"Answer.

"I will, the Lord being my helper."

ORDERING OF PRIESTS.

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I

THE REAL PRESENCE

"The Real Presence of Christ's most Blessed Body and Blood is not to be sought for in the Sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament."

RICHARD HOOKER.

"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them."—2 TIM. iii. 14.

THE Sacramental teaching of the Church of England is definite and clear. It is not that of Rome. It is not that of Luther. It is not that commonly ascribed to Zwinglius. These views all are comparatively modern. Our Church's doctrine is "that which was from the beginning." It goes back to the institution of Christ and the teaching of the New Testament.

To the Church, then, we appeal for an answer to the particular "Church question" before us to-day: Where, and when, and how, is the Body and Blood of Christ really present in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper?

In 1594, only twenty-three years after the final publication of the Thirty-nine Articles, the "judicious Hooker" answered the question thus:

"The Real Presence of Christ's most Blessed Body and Blood is not to be sought for in the Sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament" ("Eccl. Pol.," V. lxvii. 6).

These words are clear. There is no mistake about the

answer which Hooker here gives to our question. But is it the right answer? Is it the Church's answer?

I will endeavour

First—to show that it is the right answer.

Secondly—to point out its significance.

Lastly—to emphasize its importance.

First, then, let me show that the true doctrine of the Church of England is that expressed by Hooker in the words already cited. Hooker's words contain two propositions—one negative, the other positive.

I. The *negative* statement is this :

"The Real Presence of Christ's most Blessed Body and Blood is *not* to be sought for in the Sacrament" (*i.e.*, in the consecrated elements of the Sacrament).

That this is the doctrine of our Church is abundantly clear.

1. In the last rubric of the Communion Service she teaches that "the Sacramental bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances," and that the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven and not here, it being against the truth of Christ's natural Body to be at one time in more places than one." If Christ's natural Body and Blood are "not here," how can they be present in the consecrated bread and wine?

2. In Article XXIX.¹ our Church further teaches that it is possible to partake of the consecrated bread and wine, and yet to be "in no wise" partaker of Christ; while in the third rubric at the end of "the Communion of the Sick," she teaches that the sick man may eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, if he truly repent and steadfastly believe, although (for any just impediment) he do not

¹ The doctrine of this Article was held by the Lutheran divines to be fatal to their theory of consubstantiation, and was expressly condemned by the "Formula Concordiæ," published by them six years after the final adoption of the Article.

receive the Sacrament with his mouth. If either of the two parts of the Sacrament may be received without the other, how can it be said that the one is to be sought for in the other ?

3. The words of the Consecration Prayer, read in the light of history, teach the same thing. In the first reformed Prayer-Book the petition of that prayer stood thus :

“ Vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these Thy gifts, and creatures of bread and wine, that they may be unto us the Body and Blood of Thy most dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ.”

In the Second Prayer-Book, three years later, these words were struck out, and the following petition, which we still use, was put in their place :

“ Grant that we, receiving these Thy creatures of bread and wine, according to Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ’s holy institution, in remembrance of His death and passion, may be partakers of His most blessed Body and Blood.”

Why was this change made ? We learn the reason from contemporary documents. Some of the clergy interpreted the petition as it first stood to imply a presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in or with the consecrated elements. As this was contrary to the teaching of the Church, the words were changed to others which could not possibly bear that meaning.

4. Nowell’s “ Catechism ” confirms this teaching. The Canons of the Church, which are referred to in the rubrics of the Communion and Baptismal services, and in the preface to the Ordinal, enjoin (Canon lvii.) all schoolmasters to teach “ the larger or shorter Catechism heretofore by *public authority set forth*.” These Catechisms were compiled by Dr. Alexander Nowell, Dean of St. Paul’s, and one of them was carefully revised and approved by “ the Convocation that met in 1562 ” (apparently the Lower House of the Canterbury Convocation) “ as their own book and their professed doctrine.”

It was first published in 1570, and was reprinted in 1571, the year that the Thirty-nine Articles became part of the statute law of the land.

No doubt these Catechisms have now become obsolete, as have the "Books of Homilies," and many another book compiled 300 years ago. But every impartial student must allow their exceptional authority as a contemporaneous exposition of the meaning, intention, and effect of the language used in the Thirty-nine Articles.

From this Catechism I quote the following question and answer :

"Q. Why dost thou not grant that the Body and Blood of Christ are included in the bread and cup ; or that the bread and wine are changed into the substance of His Body and Blood ?

"A. Because that were to bring in doubt the truth of Christ's Body ; to do dishonour to Christ Himself ; and to fill them with abhorring that receive the Sacrament, if we should imagine His Body either to be enclosed in so narrow a room, or to be in many places at once, or His flesh to be . . . eaten as other meat."

Is not, then, Hooker's negative proposition established ? Is it not clearly the doctrine of the Church of England that " the Real Presence of Christ's most Blessed Body and Blood is not to be sought for in the Sacrament " —that is, in the consecrated bread and wine ?

II. This is equally true of the *positive* part of his statement that " the Real Presence of Christ's most Blessed Body and Blood " is to be sought for " in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament."

Our Twenty-eighth Article affirms, in the words of Scripture, that

" To such as rightly, worthily, and by faith receive ' the Supper of the Lord,' the bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ." Similarly the Church Catechism tells us that " the in-

ward part or thing signified" in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is

"The Body and Blood of Christ, which is verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper."

So the Communion Service :

"The benefit is great if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive this Holy Sacrament, for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His Blood ; then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us ; we are one with Christ and Christ with us."

In Nowell's "Catechism," quoted above, we have the following questions and answers :

"Q. Is there, then, not only a figure but the truth itself of the benefits that thou hast rehearsed delivered in the Supper ?

"A. What else ? For sith Christ is the truth itself, it is no doubt but that the thing which He testifieth in words and representeth in signs He performed also in deed, and delivereth it unto us ; and that He as surely maketh them that believe in Him partakers of His Body and Blood, as they surely know that they have received the bread and wine with their mouth and stomach.

"Q. Sith we be on the earth, and Christ's Body in heaven, how can that be that thou sayest ?

"A. We must lift our souls and hearts from earth, and raise them up by faith to heaven, where Christ is."

Our formularies abound in proof that Hooker rightly defines our Church's teaching on this its positive side, but those now given suffice.

In each of these places just quoted it is made quite clear that the Sacrament is a channel of blessing to those, and to those only, "who rightly, worthily, and by faith *receive* the same." There must be *reception*, and it must be reception by *faith*. Faith must raise our souls and

hearts to heaven, where Christ is. And so we say, "Lift up your hearts," "We lift them up unto the Lord."

Secondly, I will try to explain the significance and meaning of the doctrine so defined.

We have seen that the Church of England plainly teaches that "only after an heavenly and spiritual manner" (Article XXVIII.) "the Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." What does this mean?

Let us turn to the New Testament, and observe the light thrown upon this inquiry by (a) our Lord's teaching previous to the institution of the Lord's Supper, and also by (b) the actual words used by Him when He ordained this Feast of Love.

(a) As we look back to Christ's previous teaching we are struck by the fact that our Lord had already made frequent use of the figures of eating and drinking as the means of conveying spiritual truth.

We recall His conversation with the woman of Samaria. "Whosoever *drinketh* of the Water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John iv. 14). In the same chapter He had said to His disciples, "My *meat* is that I may do the will of Him who sent Me and finish His work" (verse 32).

In the synagogue at Capernaum He had told the Jews, "Except ye *eat* the flesh of the Son of man and *drink* His Blood, ye have no life in you. He that *eateth* My flesh and *drinketh* My Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 53, 54).

At the Feast of Tabernacles He cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and *drink*" (vii. 39).

It will be noted that in two of these places it is the Holy Spirit Who (as often elsewhere) is described as the Living Water, which the Lord gives us to "drink."

Two of our Lord's miracles had been wrought to provide food for hungering multitudes, and we have Christ's own authority for regarding these as signs of the great

truth that Christ is Himself the *food* of hungering souls. He Himself unfolds the sign which underlay the miracle in the well-known words, "I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35). Just as eating and drinking stay the hunger and thirst of the body, so "coming" and "believing" stay the hunger and thirst of the soul. The sixth chapter of St. John shows that the material phrases "eat" and "drink" have for their spiritual counterparts the parallel phrases "come" (verse 35), "believe" (verse 35), "see" (verse 40), "hear" (verse 45), "learn" (verse 45).

The earlier teaching of Christ had thus prepared the disciples for the like plainly figurative language which He used at the Last Supper. They would not, and did not, mistake its meaning.

Bishop Westcott, in his notes on St. John in the "Speaker's Commentary" thus explains the figure:

"To 'eat' and to 'drink' is to take to one's self by a voluntary act that which is without, and then to assimilate it and make it part of one's self. It is as it were, faith regarded in its converse action. Faith throws the believer upon and into its object; this spiritual eating and drinking brings the object of faith into the believer."

Such was our Lord's teaching in earlier days.

(b) We pass on to examine the actual words of institution. What did He say? When did He say it? He did not say merely, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood;" He said more.

He said: "This (is) My Body, which is being given (broken) for you." "This (is) My Blood," or "This (is) the New Covenant in My Blood, which is being poured out for you." In the Aramaic which our Lord spoke there would be no "is." Similarly our Jewish brethren say to this day at their Paschal meal: "This (is) the bread of affliction which our fathers ate," etc.

The study of the words of institution teaches us much.

We note, as Bishop Westcott says (on John vi. 52), "that the 'flesh' is presented in its twofold aspect as 'flesh' and 'blood,' and by this separation of its parts the idea of a violent death is presupposed."

We note, therefore, that the bread which Christ brake and the wine which He poured out symbolized, not His Body and Blood as they were before His betrayal, nor as after His Resurrection, but His Body and Blood separated *as in death*.

We note, further, that the symbolism lay in the *eating* of the bread, and in the *drinking* of the cup. It was not in the bread or in the wine, as distinct from the participation. It was in the action, or the series of actions, that the type was found; and it is so still. As our great Hooker says ("Eccl. Pol.," V. lxvii. 6):

"With this the very order of our Saviour's words agreeth; first 'Take and eat'; then 'This is My Body, which was broken for you'; first, 'Drink ye all of this'; then followeth 'This is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.' I see not which way it should be gathered by the words of Christ, when and where the bread is His Body and the cup His Blood, but only in the very heart and soul of him which receiveth them."

We conclude, therefore, that the meaning of the phrase "spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His Blood" is nothing less than this, that penitent, believing recipients, in the ordinance of Christ's own appointing, are enabled by the grace of God to appropriate to themselves the death and passion of their Saviour Christ, to feed, sustain, develop, and satisfy their soul's cravings thereby, as they do their bodily needs by the bread and wine; so that "their sinful bodies are made clean by His Body, and their souls washed through His most precious Blood, and that they may evermore dwell in Him and He in them." Those are partakers of Christ's most blessed Body and Blood whose souls, in that sacred Feast, feed

on, grow by, are satisfied with, the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood-shedding He hath obtained for us.

The "sign" is therefore in the case of the worthy receiver most "effectual" (Article XXV.).

The bread and wine are given by Christ's ministers; they are taken with the hand; they are received into the mouth; they strengthen and refresh the body. These are the outward and visible signs.

The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ as sacrificed for us, in all their wondrous efficacy, are given by God; they are taken by faith; they are received into the heart; they are for the strengthening and refreshing of the soul. This is the inward spiritual grace.¹

In respect of the outward signs, the words are "Take and eat this."; in respect of the inward grace "Feed on Him in thine heart by faith with thanksgiving."

Lastly, let me try to show the exceeding importance of this doctrine.

1. If Christ's Body can be at the same time in more places than one, or if Christ have, besides His natural Body, which is in heaven, a spiritual Body which can be on a thousand altars at the same time, then how can Christ be very man? What becomes of the Catholic doctrine of Christ's true humanity?

Article IV. teaches: "Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again His Body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth,

¹ "Quid autem est manducare Ejus carnem et bibere sanguinem, nisi communicare passionibus Ejus, et eam conversationem imitare quem habuit in carne?" (St. Bernard in Ps. iii. 3, quoted by Westcott on JOHN vi. 53.)

"Corporis et Sanguinis Sui *Figuram* Discipulis Commendavit et tradidit."

"Facinus vel flagitium videtur jubere: figura est ergo, præcipiens passioni Dominicæ communicandum . . ."—(St. Augustine, quoted by Goode, i. 261.)

until He return to judge all men at the last day." Christ's Body is in heaven, and will be in heaven till He comes again.

But it is said in reply, "It is Christ's spiritual Body, His risen and glorified Body, which we believe to be present in the Sacrament under the forms of bread and wine. Did not Christ's resurrection Body exhibit special capabilities peculiar to itself?"

The answer is obvious, and it is twofold :

(a) No doubt the "spiritual body," whether as now exhibited in Christ, or hereafter to be exhibited in His redeemed, is infinitely more glorious than the untransfigured body. St. Paul expressly contrasts the "Body of His Glory," to which our bodies shall be likened at His glorious appearing, with the "body of our humiliation" which we at present bear. But the "spiritual Body" is a body still. The qualifying adjective does not destroy the noun, and ubiquity can never be predicated of a true human body, whether in its natural or in its transfigured state.

(b) But we must go further : we must point out that, although certain modern writers insist that it is Christ's *glorified* Body which is communicated in the Sacrament, the words of institution in the Bible, and the words on delivery in the Prayer-Book, expressly contradict the idea, which also renders meaningless the manual acts of *breaking* the bread and taking the cup. The words of institution are quoted as if they were these four : "This is My Body." But we have seen this is only a part of what Christ said. This is to argue as others do who say that the doctrine of the Trinity contradicts the words "God is one." The words are : "This is My Body *which is being given for you.*" "This is My Blood *which is being poured out for you.*"

It is not Christ's glorified Body, but His Body as in the act of being given for us, His Blood as in the act of being shed for us, which is the "inward part or thing signified" in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Any other view tends not to elevate, but to degrade, the true conception of the Sacrament, and to imperil one of the most precious and most fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith, the true humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Again, is there not risk lest, while we try to grasp a shadow, we lose the substance? If the mind of the worshipper is occupied with an imaginary Presence in the bread and wine, is there not real danger lest he fail to realize the Lord Himself, the risen, living Saviour, truly present by His Spirit with His people gathered together in His Name, to celebrate His dying love? Has He not said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them'? Is not this a Real Presence? Is not this *the* Real Presence? He was the Founder of the Feast, and He is Lord of the Feast still. It is '*the Lord's Supper*.' He was there in bodily presence at its first institution. In bodily presence will He drink of the fruit of the vine with His people in His Father's kingdom. Meanwhile, absent from us in body, He is present with us by His Spirit at each true Communion feast, according to His word: 'Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me. Because I live, ye shall live also.' You cannot hold your Saviour in your hand. He will vouchsafe to dwell in your heart by faith.

3. Further, the integrity of the Sacrament seems to be involved in this question. We find men teaching that "the fundamental idea embodied in the Holy Communion is our perpetual dependence upon the Incarnate Lord for support," etc. We are taught: "The priest invokes the power of the Spirit on the bread and wine, and they become... the Body and Blood of *the glorified Jesus*." We note here how the centre of gravity is shifted from the Atonement of Christ to the Incarnation of Christ. Our Church teaches us that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was or-

dained "for the continual remembrance of the Sacrifice of the *Death of Christ*," and the prominence given to the Blood as distinct from the Body in the original institution confirms this truth. St. Paul indeed tells us that in redeeming fallen man Christ "took part in flesh and blood, *in order that* through death He might destroy the devil." But now, according to the modern theory, the second part of the Sacrament almost drops out of account. If the Incarnation is the main idea, *that* is conveyed (in figure) by the bread without the wine; and (in language) by the Body without the Blood. So St. John says, "The Word was made flesh," not "flesh and blood"; the latter is implied in the former. Why, then, did Christ "take the cup"? Why did He say, "Drink ye all of this"? Why did He repeat, "Do this, *as often as ye drink it*, in remembrance of Me"? Is it not obvious that on this hypothesis the "drink ye all of this" loses its force, and so the integrity of the Sacrament itself is imperilled. Accordingly we find men teaching thus: "It is instinctively assumed that the Sacrament of the Lord's Body is the chief thing, and the Sacrament of the precious Blood *takes a secondary place*." This is a most serious matter. It is not a long step from "the chief thing" to "the only thing"—that is, the Sacrament in one kind. It seems more than likely that the demand for "reservation," if conceded, will lead to this consummation. No! in the words of one of our most learned living divines, "That which we are to feed upon in the Lord's Supper is not simply the Body of Christ, but the Body and Blood of Christ, as separated one from another in sacrificial death—the death which Christ died for our sins. What is in faith's view here is not the Incarnation merely, but that which we are taught to regard as the purpose of the Incarnation—the Atonement made by the Son of God, dying our death, putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Dimock, "Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," p. 15).

4. Church history warns us of the supreme importance of contending earnestly for the truth on this great subject. Every student knows that false, degrading, and materialistic views on the subject of the Lord's Supper were largely responsible for the moral corruption and religious superstition under which the Church groaned in what are called the Middle Ages. We as Englishmen ought to remember this. Our Church's deliverance from the yoke of bondage was largely due to the clear perception which our Reformers had of the truth of God on this important subject. It is not too much to say that in England the Reformation turned on this question. In other countries it was not so. In Germany the crucial subjects were justification by faith and the iniquity of Papal indulgences; in Bohemia, the withholding the cup from the laity; elsewhere it has been the Pope's supremacy, or Mariolatry, or Papal infallibility, which has been the point at issue. But in England the Reformation hinged on the teaching of Holy Scripture as to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It was for the primitive doctrine on this great subject that bishops and clergy, men and women, old and young, went boldly to the stake. They hoisted once again the banner of pure and clear sacramental truth in our beloved Church. Shall we incur before our Church and nation the tremendous responsibility of suffering it now to be hauled down? They lighted the candle of God's truth on this momentous subject. Shall we suffer it again to be put out? God forbid! Nay; rather we say to each of you what St. Paul said to Timothy, in the words of my text: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them."

I might urge by other arguments the vast importance of this subject, but I forbear.

I have endeavoured, under a deep sense of duty,

to show that there can be no presence of Christ's Body and Blood in, or with, or under, the forms of bread and wine ; that there is, nevertheless, a real and special appropriation and participation by the worthy receivers of the infinite blessings which come to them through the broken Body and the poured out Blood of Jesus Christ their Lord ; and, lastly, that the maintenance of the truth on this great subject is in these last days of supreme importance to the maintenance of spiritual religion and the salvation of immortal souls. May God bless the words which have been spoken !

I close this subject with an extract from an episcopal charge to his clergy delivered by a Bishop of Durham many years ago :

“ In Baptism water is the outward sign ; by prayer it is consecrated to a holy purpose ; it becomes a means and pledge of the cleansing grace of the Holy Spirit, and a new birth unto righteousness. But there is no change in the nature of the water ; it remains precisely what it was before, though hallowed to God's service. The Holy Spirit descends not into the water, but into the heart of the child of grace. In like manner in the other Sacrament the bread and wine are not changed in their nature by consecration ; they remain in every respect the same as they were before, as the evidence of the senses of sight and touch and taste unitedly testify. But, in obedience to the Lord's command, they are appropriated to a holy use, and thus become, not themselves the Lord, whose dying love they exhibit, but certain sure signs, means, and pledges of the benefits which believers receive through the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ. The Lord enters not into the bread—the very thought is so degrading to His glorified body as to seem almost blasphemous—but He dwells spiritually in the heart of the believer, and witnesses, to his great comfort, that he is one with

Christ, and Christ with him. And thus the Catechism says that the inward part—the thing signified by the elements, not existing in them—is ‘the Body and Blood of Christ, verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper.’ ”

II

EUCCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

"Take heed, lest of the memory it be made a sacrifice."

CHURCH OF ENGLAND HOMILY 22.

"Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually."—HEB. xiii. 15.

ON the great subject of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, as on that of the Real Presence, our Church's teaching is clear. She teaches :

First, that in no real sense whatever is there a sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ in the celebration of the Holy Communion.

Secondly, that there is, notwithstanding, in the Supper of the Lord a true Eucharistic Sacrifice.

I will endeavour to establish both these positions.

I. Our Church plainly teaches that there is in no real sense a sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Let me first (a) prove this, and then (b) explain it.

(a) Before the Reformation it was commonly held that the sacrifice of the Cross as a propitiation for sins was daily renewed in the Eucharist ; and it is widely taught now in the Church of England that " that which our Lord by the hands of the priest offers to His Father in the Holy Eucharist is His own Body and Blood, the very same which He offers and presents to Him."

This doctrine our Church condemns.

1. In her Thirty-first Article, entitled "Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross," she teaches us thus :

"The offering of Christ once made is the perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said that the priests did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."

2. The rejection of this view of the Eucharistic Sacrifice was one of the first processes of the Reformation. The First Prayer-Book of Edward VI., while retaining much that has since been discarded, "rejected all those prayers and actions in the Sarum Missal which implied the sacrifice of the Mass"; and not only were these prayers, seven in number, absolutely omitted, but our Reformers then inserted in the Prayer of Consecration words altogether new, which contain the strongest possible protest against the sacrifice of the Mass. I quote from the First Prayer-Book, but we have them in substance still :

"O God, heavenly Father, which of Thy tender mercy didst give Thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption, who made there (by His one oblation once offered) a full, perfect, sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in His Holy Gospel command us to celebrate a perpetual memory of that, His precious death until His coming again. . . ."

3. In 1563 the second Book of Homilies was published, in which we have the following important principle enunciated, which bears closely on our subject :

"Before all other things this we must be sure

of especially : that this Supper be in suchwise done and ministered as our Lord and Saviour did, and commanded to be done ; as His holy Apostles used it, and the good Fathers of the primitive Church frequented it. For as that worthy man St. Ambrose said : ' He is unworthy the Lord that otherways doth celebrate that mystery than it was delivered by Him ; neither can he be devout that otherways doth presume than it was given by the Author. We must take heed lest of the memory it be made a sacrifice.' "

It needs no proof that our blessed Lord offered no sacrifice when He instituted the Lord's Supper in the upper chamber. The time, the place, the posture, the words, all forbid the thought.

4. Similarly Nowell's "Catechism," referred to in the last sermon, teaches :

" (Christ), when He did institute His Supper, commanded us to eat His Body, not to offer it. As for the prerogative of offering for sins, it pertaineth to Christ alone, as to Him which is the eternal Priest, which also, when He died upon the Cross, once made that only and everlasting sacrifice for our salvation, and fully performed the same for ever. For us there is nothing left to do but to take the use and benefit of that eternal sacrifice bequeathed us by the Lord Himself, which we chiefly do in the Lord's Supper."

5. The removal of the altars in our churches at the time of the Reformation, and the substitution of communion-tables, was with the object of rendering impossible any such doctrine as that which had been previously held on this important subject. To this day the Church of England knows nothing of an "altar" as part of the furniture of her churches. The term so applied is not found anywhere in the Book of Common Prayer, and the loyal Churchman should be careful to avoid its use.

(b) But how do we explain and account for the fact that our Church so emphatically condemns this view of the Eucharistic Sacrifice ?

1. *First*, because *it is contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture*. That there can be in any sense a sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Supper of the Lord is directly opposed to the following (among other) passages of the New Testament :—

Heb. ix. 25 : “ Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own . . . but now once (or ‘ once for all ’) at the end of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by sacrifice of Himself.”

Heb. x. 10 : “ By which will we have been sanctified by the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

The sacrifice had been offered once for all, and presented once for all, and accepted once for all, when the everlasting doors were lifted up, that He who had offered it might enter as the King of Glory, and receive the name which is above every name, and sit down at the right hand of God. The medieval heresy of the Eucharistic Sacrifice derogates from the completeness and all-sufficiency of His Atonement, who made “ there ” (upon the cross) “ by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.”

2. But, again, this teaching is condemned with so much emphasis for another reason. Just as the so-called Real Presence contravenes the Catholic truth of the Incarnation, so the medieval doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice contravenes the Catholic verity of Christ’s session at the right hand of God. The notion that our blessed Lord is now engaged in presenting

to the Father His sacrifice on the cross is absolutely without the slightest warrant in Holy Scripture. It was because the presentation had been made and accepted that the decree went forth, "Sit Thou at My right hand," that Christ is now invested with all authority in heaven and earth, and exalted far above all principality and power and every name that is named.

3. A third reason why the Church of England so carefully excludes what is commonly called the Eucharistic Sacrifice is that no trace is to be found of any such doctrine in the earliest centuries of the Church's life. Nay, even the very canon of the Mass itself witnesses against it, as was pointed out by Ridley and Latimer during their imprisonment.

4. A fourth reason is to be found in the fact that the Reformers had before their very eyes the fearful degradation of the Holy Sacrament which this false teaching had produced, and the baneful influence upon true religion which it everywhere exercised, and had exercised for centuries past. Upon this I cannot now dwell, but I earnestly invite your attention to this historical aspect of our subject.

5. A final and very important reason is analogous to one urged in the first sermon. It was there shown that a false and unscriptural view of the Lord's presence led to the neglect of the true doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ assuredly promised in the midst of His believing people. And so here: the medieval heresy commonly known as the Eucharistic Sacrifice must inevitably lead to the disregard of the truth concerning Eucharistic Sacrifice as set forth in the Word of God. This leads me to our second subject.

II. I proceed therefore to show that although our Church repudiates the heresy that there is in the celebration of the Lord's Supper a sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, she does hold and does plainly teach

that *there is in this blessed Sacrament a real Eucharistic Sacrifice.*

Let us take the words in order each by itself, "Eucharist" and "Sacrifice."

First, "Eucharist." This is one of those words, like "Church" and "Catholic," which we must on no account part with, however much they are abused. Our Reformers were wise in this respect. "Eucharist" is simply the transliteration of a Greek word which means thanksgiving, and "Eucharistic" is, of course, its adjective. Now, in each one of the four accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper this word is used. Each expressly tells us of our Lord "giving thanks" at the Last Supper. Accordingly, our Reformers do not hesitate to call the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion "the Eucharist," or the "Service of Thanksgiving." So in the Homilies (xxvii., part 2) :

"The godly fathers called it *Eucharistia*—that is, thanksgiving ; as if they should have said, ' Now, above all other things, ye ought to laud and praise God.' "

And so in the Latin version of Article XXVIII, last clause, "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper" is "*Sacramentum Eucharistiæ.*"

And they went further. They took pains to emphasize the Eucharistic character of the service as it had never been emphasized before. Note the following language.

In the first exhortation :

"It is our duty to render *most humble and hearty thanks* to Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that He hath given us His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that Holy Sacrament."

In the third exhortation :

"*And above all things ye must give most humble and hearty thanks* to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost for the redemption of the world by the

death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man."

Before the proper prefaces :

"Let us *give thanks to our Lord God.*" "It is meet, right and our bounden duty that we should *at all times and in all places give thanks* unto Thee." "Therefore with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, *we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name, evermore praising Thee and saying. . . .*"

So in each word of administration :

"Feed on Him in thy heart by faith with *thanksgiving,*" and "*Be thankful.*"

So in each Post Communion prayer :

"Accept this *our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving ;*" "We *heartily thank* Thee."

And so on till the service closes with the grand Eucharistic hymn :

"We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, *we give thanks* to Thee for Thy great glory. . . ."

Now, at least one-half of these quotations are from portions of the service added at the time of the Reformation, so earnestly did the Church of England set herself to make the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, like its prototype, a true "Eucharistia" or sacrifice of joy and praise.

Next, consider the word "sacrifice." This, too, is a word we must never give up, especially in connection with the Lord's Supper. We must keep out the false sense of it by laying stress upon the true. In the quaint language of a day past, "We must keep chaff out of the bushel by filling it with wheat."

"What is a sacrifice?" A sacrifice is a gift or offering, *of any kind*, made to God as a religious action. It need not involve the shedding of blood. It need not be *material* at all. It may be material; it may be spiritual. We have both in this last chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Verse 16 speaks of *material* sacrifices, verse

15 of *spiritual*. The sacrifices which we may offer are very diverse in kind. There is one kind, however, we can never offer. We can never offer any propitiatory sacrifice. And there is no need. The Gospel reveals the One Propitiatory Sacrifice. That was offered, presented, accepted by the one eternal Priest upon the altar of the cross. That was the sacrifice of Himself, the one sacrifice for sins for ever. 'There is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone' (Article XXXI.).

Other sacrifices we may and we must offer, if we are Christ's disciples indeed. Some are *material*—our money, our works, our time, our service, our lives. Some are *spiritual*—our broken and contrite heart, our prayers, our praises, our joy and thanksgiving. Such, when offered in the Name of our one and only Mediator, God our Father will, for Christ's sake, graciously accept.

And what time so fitting for these our sacrifices as that feast of love in which we commemorate with praise and thanksgiving the one perfect and sufficient propitiatory sacrifice which Christ our Master made for us when He gave His Body to be broken and His Blood to be shed upon the cross ?

Accordingly, our Prayer-Book contemplates a very real and varied Eucharistic sacrifice in the service called "The order for the administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion"; and it is of the first importance that that this should be kept vividly before the mind of every devout communicant. This sacrifice is in part material, but mainly spiritual.

1. The *material* part is our offerings of worldly goods, whether money or other devotions of the people. These, having been collected during the reading of Scripture, are received at the hands of fit representatives of the congregation, and humbly presented and placed upon the holy table. The congregation then ("we"), by the mouth of their minister, humbly beseech God most mercifully to accept the alms and oblations so presented.

2. The *spiritual* part of the Eucharistic sacrifice is threefold :

(a) There is the *sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart* in the humble confession of the communicants. The intensity of this prayer has excited criticism and surprise because it has not been understood in the light of Psalm li. 17. The Absolution and the Comfortable Words are the heavenly balm with which the wounded soul is bound up by Him who accepts the sacrifice and healeth them that are broken in heart.

(b) There is "*our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,*" which in the first Post Communion prayer we ask God of His fatherly goodness mercifully to accept. The presentation of this part of the Eucharistic Sacrifice began with the appeal, "Lift up your hearts," "Let us give thanks unto our Lord God," and in strictness ended with the Trisagion, "Holy, holy, holy," which follows the Proper Prefaces, although the sweet savour of this sacrifice of joy and praise reaches even to the two words of administration which end respectively, as we have noticed, with the words "thanksgiving," "Be thankful."

(c) There is again "*the reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice*" of "*ourselves, our souls, and bodies,*" which at the close of the service, in an exquisite prayer of dedication, "we here offer and present unto Thee, O Lord."

Who shall say that, notwithstanding all the false teaching which has gathered round the phrase, there is not in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper a true Eucharistic Sacrifice presented by each believing communicant, and accepted by God as the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice well pleasing, acceptable to God through the merits of that dear Lord who offered on the cross the one and only propitiatory sacrifice, through which alone we are able to draw nigh to God at all, and offer to Him, unworthy as we are, any sacrifice ?

We only further note two things :

First, with what dignity the Holy Sacrament, so understood, shines forth. The false view of the Eucharistic

Sacrifice, as all history teaches, degrades this sacred ordinance. The true view clothes it with the highest practical and spiritual beauty in the life of the individual disciple of Christ, and the well-being of the visible Church. Well might our martyred Reformers lay down their lives to vindicate for us the truth of God on this momentous subject.

Next, what a high Christian ideal does the truth on this subject bring before us ! Who is the devout communicant ? He who has been taught by God's Holy Spirit the truth about his own sinfulness, and thus offers continually the sacrifice of a broken spirit, which God will not despise ; the truth about Christ's full and free salvation, for which he offers continually the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving ; the truth about the consecrated life, which leads him thus continually to lay *himself*, soul and body, a sacrifice on God's altar ; the truth about the stewardship of believers which he confesses every time he partakes of the Lord's Supper by presenting to the Lord the alms and oblations of his worldly goods.

In proportion as we rise to this ideal, by the power of the Holy Ghost, shall we appreciate, cling to, and contend for, the truth about the Eucharistic Sacrifice once for all delivered to the saints.

III

AURICULAR CONFESSION

"It is most evident and plain that this auricular confession hath not the warrant of God's Word."

CHURCH OF ENGLAND HOMILY OF REPENTANCE.

"I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."—Ps. xxxii. 5.

THERE are three kinds of confession mentioned in the New Testament.

1. *Confession to God* (whether public or private), humble, penitent, sincere.

2. *Confession to our neighbour* of any wrong we have done him, accompanied, wherever possible, by restitution.

3. *Confession before the Church* of any scandal we have created to the detriment of the Gospel.

To these, in the darkest days through which Christendom ever passed, a fourth was added, viz.—

4. *Confessions of all sins to the priest* as the means of obtaining pardon from God.

It was not till 1215 A.D. that the fourth Lateran Council decreed that "every man and woman, after they come to years of discretion, should by themselves alone privately confess all their sins to their own priest, at least once a year."

Persistent efforts are now being made, as you well know, to revive in the Church of England this practice of habitual confession to a priest in a form even more

objectionable, because it applies to children. It is, we are told, a necessary part of the preparation for Holy Communion, and a condition of attaining to the highest spiritual life. A "Church question" has thus arisen, which we have before us to-day. Does this habitual confession to a priest accord with the mind and teaching of the Church of England, or not?

Let us begin our study of this momentous question by tracing the historical development of the matter, and then we will examine the teaching of our Formularies regarding it.

I. It is clear that every society must have the power to expel from its ranks unworthy members who bring it only harm. This power was committed to the Church by Christ Himself. We find accordingly that in the early Church there were certain grievous sins—*e.g.*, murder, adultery, and apostasy—which were regarded as cutting off the persons committing them from the fellowship of the Church. In any such case Church privileges were wholly forfeited, and re-admission to them could only be granted upon the clearest evidence of genuine and true repentance. The penitent was required to make before the Church a public confession of the sin committed, which was followed by public absolution and release from the pains and penalties of exclusion.

The confession in such a case dealt only with the particular sin which involved the forfeiture of membership, and the absolution consisted only of release from the particular penalty thereby incurred. That the absolution was the act of the whole Church is clearly seen in the well-known case of the incestuous Corinthian (2 Cor. ii. 6, 7).

This is the kind of "confession" and "absolution" generally referred to by the early Christians when these words are found in their writings. This was the simple and Scriptural rite which in after ages was perverted by

the perverseness of human nature into what is called " sacramental " or " auricular " confession.

We see at once that the difference between the two things is prodigious, and it is fundamental. The confession and absolution of the early Church was the condition of *regaining* Church communion forfeited by deadly sin. The confession and absolution of the mediæval Church was the alleged means of *retaining* a communion which had never been forfeited. It was indeed a condition necessary to the full participation in the sacred ordinances of the Gospel. The one deals with scandals against Church purity ; the other presumes to deal with every kind of sin.

The process of perversion was gradual ; it extended over many centuries, and was marked by certain well-defined steps. These we will endeavour to trace.

1. The first step was taken in the third century after Christ.

We have seen that *apostasy* was one of the mortal sins which very properly led to exclusion from Church membership. In days of persecution the temptation to *apostasy* was, of course, great. Many fell ; the fear of death was too much for them. They abjured Christ to save their lives, and in very many cases they repented afterwards with a bitter sorrow.

It was found hard to deal with all these cases in the ordinary manner before the assembled Church ; hence a special Presbyter was sometimes appointed, whose office it was to act in such cases on behalf of the Church. It was his duty to reserve the more serious cases for public confession, and to re-admit the others on such terms as he thought right, but always in the name of, and on behalf of, the whole congregation. This office Nectarius, Bishop of Constantinople, put down there in A.D. 391, to free the Church from the danger of disgrace (Hooker, vi. 4, 9).

2. The second step was taken about two centuries later, in the time of Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome.

Leo decided that it was not necessary that congregations should be offended by the hearing the confessions of those who, having incurred Church censure, desired re-admission. He ruled it to be sufficient if the priests, on behalf of the Church, received the confession. But still the absolution was only re-admission to Church membership, and was the act of the whole Church, though pronounced by the Bishop, and, except, in cases of urgency, by him alone.

3. The third step was most serious in its kind. Originally, as we have seen, the sins which involved exclusion from the Church were practically three in number—murder, adultery and apostasy. As time went on, the category of offences visited with excommunication was considerably increased, and a longer or shorter period of exclusion was adjudged according as the sin was accounted more or less heinous. But, nevertheless, on re-admission the penitent knelt in full view of the people, while the form of prayer was being used, the effect of which was to release him from the censures of the Church, and to restore him to the communion of the faithful.

4. A fourth step, taken in the seventh century after Christ, is ascribed to Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury. The penitent was allowed to commute his sentence of excommunication by a gift of money. Many of our religious foundations owe their origin to this degrading commutation.

So far, however, there had been no avowed change of *theory*. Confession and absolution were still theoretically concerned with the public restoration to Church privileges which had been forfeited by sins which brought scandal on the Church.

In practice, no doubt, the change had been enormous. The *public* confession had become practically a *private* confession. The sin confessed was still, indeed, some definite offence against Church rule, but no longer necessarily a mortal sin, such as murder, adultery and

apostasy. The substitution of a fine for exclusion made it to the financial advantage of the Church to push such a lucrative system as far as she possibly could. All this meant change almost beyond recognition of the original Scriptural system.

And it all meant that further changes were inevitable. This was only a matter of time. The way had been paved for them. The system had already been perverted into a powerful means of exalting the priesthood and enriching the Church. It remained only to develop it into the mightiest engine yet devised for enslaving the minds and consciences of men.

5. This was done by the decree of the fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, when Innocent III. was Pope. Every adult Churchman was enjoined to confess all his sins to the priest at least once a year, on pain of being deprived of communion; and some half a century later the form of absolution was changed from the ancient precatory form, as in our Communion Service, to the "I absolve thee," which was introduced in the provincial synod of London in 1268.

And this was not all. A hundred years later, with a view to suggest some sort of sanction of the radical changes now effected, the words of our blessed Lord in John xx. 23 were added to the service for the Ordering of Priests. These words, spoken by our Lord, not to the apostles only, but to the whole Church, had been held, properly, to apply to the loosing and binding of ecclesiastical censures, and in this sense they had hitherto been found only in the office for consecrating bishops, to whom, as we have already seen, the act of restoring to the communion of the Church was held to pertain. For twelve centuries after Christ they had found no place in any Ordinal (of presbyters) in Christendom; so that if any argument for the power of the priesthood to absolve, otherwise than from Church censures, be based on them, the question goes by default.

This was the condition of things when, about the

middle of the sixteenth century, the English Reformation took place. And a deplorable condition it was, and that on two special grounds :

(a) Church discipline, the right use of which is one of the " Notes " of a true Church,¹ had almost ceased to exist. It was a most serious loss. We have not yet recovered it. Year by year we deplore it in our service for the first day of Lent.

The God-given machinery for administering it had been perverted to a wholly different use, for which it was not adapted. The Divine words which authorized it had been twisted and perverted to a meaning wholly inconsistent with their context, with the rest of Scripture, and with the subsequent practice of those who heard them.

As a result, we mourn to this day a loss which is well-nigh irreparable. Nor is this all :

(b) As a means of promoting true religion among men this machinery, thus applied to a purpose wholly other than—I might say directly opposed to—that for which it was designed, broke down utterly and hopelessly. The evils which sprang out of this perverted system were so obvious and so serious that it was with the removal of these that the minds of our reformers were largely engrossed. For, indeed, the iniquities of the confessional had become a by-word. The matter would brook no delay.

II. Let us now carefully note how our reformed Church dealt with a practice which for more than three hundred years had been of obligation among us with such terrible results both on the morals of the priests and the religion of the people ? What is the teaching of the Church of England regarding it ?

The subject was one of the first to engage the attention of our reformers, and in four short years habitual confession was numbered among the many corruptions

¹ Homily for Whit-Sunday.

which, with an unsparing hand (God be praised !), they "cut away and clean rejected."

This they did in two stages : they first abolished the compulsory character of this confession, and then the thing itself.

Let me show how this was done :

(a) Edward VI. became King in January, 1547. The very next year "The Order of Communion" was published. With this the history of our public formularies may be said to commence. It abolishes *compulsory* confession in these words, which are taken from the opening exhortation :

" . . . requiring such as shall be satisfied with a General Confession not to be offended with them that doth use to their further satisfying the auricular and secret confession to the priest ; nor those also which think needful or convenient for the quietness of their own consciences particularly to open their sins to their priest to be offended with them which are satisfied with their humble confession to God, and the General Confession to the Church."

The same language is used in the First Prayer-Book, which was published the next year (1549).

This was the first step, and it was a long one. Confession to a priest was now voluntary and optional. The Church permitted, but did not require, its use. She substituted for it, as a necessary part of the Communion Service, the General Confession to Almighty God (as we have it now), to which was prefixed the following rubric :

"Then shall a General Confession be made in the name of all those that are minded to receive the Holy Communion, *either by one of them*, or else by one of the ministers. . . ."

(b) The First Prayer-Book was, however, "a mere temporary and unsatisfactory compromise." It pleased no one. In 1552 it was superseded by the Second Book. In this the final step was taken. Habitual

confession was abolished altogether. It was done thus :

1. In the First Prayer-Book the Order of Morning and Evening Prayer began with the Lord's Prayer. The Sentences, Exhortation, General Confession, and Absolution were now for the first time prefixed. The effect of this was to show that henceforth in the Church of England, both in the daily worship and in the Communion Service, public, united, general confession to Almighty God by minister and people together, was to take the place of auricular confession to the priest.

2. The exhortation in the Communion Service was changed in the same sense. In the First Book it had read thus :

“ And if there be any of you whose conscience is troubled and grieved in anything, lacking comfort and counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned priest, taught in the law of God, and confess and open his sin and grief secretly, that he may receive such ghostly counsel, advice, and comfort, that his conscience may be relieved, and that of us (as of the ministers of God and of the Church) he may receive comfort and absolution, to the satisfaction of his mind, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.”

In the Second Prayer-Book this was altered as follows :

“ Because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience ; therefore, if there be any of you who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let' him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief ; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his con-

science, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."

Observe the words struck out: "priest," "confess," "sin," "secretly," "Church." Notice the condition inserted: "if there be any of you who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience." These words show that self-examination, secret confession to God, and restitution to our neighbour are and should be ordinarily the sufficient means of preparation. Note again the stress laid on the Bible: "Minister of God's Word," "ministry of God's holy Word." The importance of these changes will be very clearly seen. Instead of recourse to the priest for secret confession and absolution, our Church enjoins in exceptional cases of doubt and perplexity recourse to the pastor with a view to the application to the wounded conscience of the comfortable salve of God's Word. The godly pastor, with his open Bible, takes the place of the Father Confessor.

3. But what if in extreme sickness a penitent could not join in the General Confession, or betake himself to his faithful pastor? He might have his conscience troubled with some weighty matter. He may have been guilty of what, if it had been known, would have cut him off from Church membership. How did our Reformers provide for such a case? The rubrics in the Visitation Service show.

In the first three years of the Reformation, when auricular confession was permissible, though no longer compulsory, these rubrics (having directed that the sick man shall be urged to make his will and declare his debts, and remember the poor), proceed thus:

"Here shall the sick person make a special confession, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the Priest shall absolve him after this form; and the same form of absolution shall be used in all private confessions."

Observe, this does not contemplate a detailed confession of all kinds of sin, but a *special* confession of some *weighty* matter from which the conscience has not found relief.

Some three years later, in the Second Prayer-Book, this rubric was changed by the omission of the last clause. Why? Because all other kinds of private confession were, as we have seen, abolished. The word "form" also is changed to "sort."

And, as time went on, the rubric was still further guarded. Canon 67 (A.D. 1603) directs the minister or curate to "instruct and comfort them" (the dangerously sick) "according to the order of the Communion-Book, if he be no preacher; or if he be a preacher, *then as he shall think most needful and convenient.*" This service for the Visitation of the Sick is the only service in the Prayer-Book the use of which is optional. Any clergyman who hesitates to use a form of words which for twelve centuries, as we have seen, had no place in the liturgies of Christendom is expressly released from the obligation to do so.

After the last revision of the Prayer-Book, in 1662, the rubric read thus: "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter"; and after the words "the Priest shall absolve him" were added, "if he shall humbly and heartily desire it."

I direct attention to these points because the Prayer-Book still contains the form of absolution in the Visitation Service; and we are asked, Does not this undoubted fact practically concede the whole point at issue? What is our reply?

It is undoubtedly true that, contrary to their usual practice, the late medieval form, "I absolve thee," was in this special case, and in it alone, retained in a permissive manner by our Reformers, and that it still finds place in the English (although not in the American

or Irish) edition of the Book of Common Prayer ; but it is also true that the context clearly shows in what sense the words are used. Sins involving excommunication are complex in character. They are sins against God ; they are also sins against His Church. Accordingly, the Absolution before us is part in the precatory, part in the indicative, form. God's forgiveness is besought. The Church's forgiveness is bestowed. The prayer which immediately follows makes this clear.

That prayer is of high antiquity. It was itself the original absolution for dying penitents. It deals with the sin confessed and repented of, as against God, and also as against the unity of the Church. As against God, pardon, mercy, forgiveness are still prayed for, although the penitent has confessed and been absolved. "Open Thine eye of mercy upon this Thy servant, *who most earnestly desireth pardon and forgiveness.*" As against the Church, on the other hand, restoration to Church membership is referred to as an accomplished fact. This is what the Absolution has done, and so we find the prayer is not "*restore* this sick member to the unity of the Church," but "*preserve and continue* this sick member in the unity of the Church," to which, by the ministerial act immediately preceding, he had been already restored.

4. The second Book of Homilies, which was published in 1563, eleven years after the Second Prayer-Book, puts the intention of our Church in the clearest possible light. The Homilies are the Church's manual of preaching, as the Articles are her manual of doctrine and the Prayer-Book her manual of devotion. The 80th Canon bids the churchwardens provide them, along with the Bible and Prayer-Book, for every church, and Article XXXV. judges them "to be read in churches distinctly and diligently, that they may be understood of the people." Hear now the teaching of the Homilies on this subject.

Referring to St. James' words, "Confess your faults one to another," the Homily on repentance proceeds ;

“ And whereas the adversaries go about to wrest this place, for to maintain their auricular confession withal, they are greatly deceived themselves, and do shamefully deceive others ; for if this text ought to be understood of auricular confession, then the priests are as much bound to confess themselves unto the lay people, as the lay people are bound to confess themselves to them. And if to pray is to absolve, then the laity by this place hath as great authority to absolve the priests, as the priests have to absolve the laity.”

And again :

“ It is most evident and plain that this auricular confession hath not the warrant of God’s Word.”

The manner in which our Church has dealt with this matter demands our warmest admiration and gratitude. She substitutes the primitive for the medieval, the Scriptural for the superstitious and corrupt, the pastoral for the priestly. She does not simply abolish the false, she brings in the true. She does not simply content herself with abolishing auricular confession to a priest as it was practised in pre-Reformation days; she recognizes as underlying this question two important, nay, essential subjects and these she now emphasizes and replaces in their due proportion. Confession she restores to its proper place in the services of the Church, but it is confession open, and not private ; to God, and not to man ; general, and not particular. True pastoral intercourse, again, she restores to its proper place ; and bids her ministers listen patiently to the trials and difficulties of any of their flock, and solve them, as far as may be, by the blessed Scriptures of truth. In the same breath in which she condemns the false she commends the true. The Homily already quoted proceeds :

“ I do not say but that if any do find themselves troubled in conscience, they may repair to their learned curate or pastor, or to some other godly, learned man, and show the trouble and doubt of

their conscience to them, that they may receive at their hand the comfortable salve of God's Word ; but it is against the true Christian liberty that any man should be bound to the numbering of his sins, as it hath been used heretofore in the time of blindness and ignorance."

The stress laid upon true pastoral intercourse in the Church of England appears very clearly in the Ordination Service. In Canon 113, also, where the minister is generally urged to aid in presenting to the Bishop notorious or scandalous offenders in his parish, he is expressly forbidden so to deal with what comes to his knowledge through the unburdening of any conscience in the confidential pastoral intercourse with any member of his flock, lest that intercourse be any way hindered.

My deep conviction is that the attempt to revive the Confessional is the most perilous of all the developments of the medieval reaction which is so largely obscuring Scriptural truth in our land. No words of mine can measure the fearful responsibility incurred by those who are making the endeavour. Would to God they might be led to see this ! They go beyond even the pernicious medieval decree of the Lateran Council. That applied only to those who have come to years of discretion. But now, in defiance of all laws, human and Divine, little children, boys and girls at school, are being allured to the Confessional, and told that God "absolutely requires" it. Confirmation candidates are urged that they ought to make their first confession before they are presented for the laying on of hands.

Should this attack on our English home-life, our religious liberty, and the manliness of our national character once succeed, the degradation—political, moral, and spiritual—of our beloved Church and of our native land will surely follow, as has been the case with every priest-ridden people on the face of the globe.

My last word on this great subject to you all, especially to my younger hearers, is this : As you value domestic

peace, as you desire eternal salvation, beware of the Confessional ! Remember well the warning of our Church : “ It is most evident and plain that this auricular confession has not the warrant of God’s Word.” It may suit the notions of a luxurious and self-indulgent age ; it may seem to soothe the gnawings of a conscience ill at ease ; but the peace it gives is a false, treacherous peace, a peace that at the last will only mock a poor deluded soul, a peace like that against which the Saviour warns us, which the world can give and which the world can take away—a broken reed which, when most man needs support, will run into his hand and pierce it.

NOTE.—Those of my readers who desire to follow the historical aspect of this great question with more detail are advised to study Bishop Reichel’s Sermon preached before the University of Cambridge on June 10, 1883, and published in 1884 by Messrs. Longmans and Co., London.

IV

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

“ Let us not, therefore, dream either of purgatory, or of prayer for the souls of them that be dead.”

CHURCH OF ENGLAND HOMILY ON PRAYER.

“ The secret things belong unto the Lord our God : but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.”—DEUT. xxix. 29.

THE “ Church question ” before us to-day is exercising many minds and distressing many souls. It is this : Does our Church sanction the use of prayer for our loved ones who have departed in the faith of Christ ?

The practice which some are seeking to revive is not, be it observed, prayer for those who have died impenitent but prayer for those who have *died in Christ*.¹

I will ask you to consider this question : *first*, in the light of Scripture ; *secondly*, in the light of Church history ; *thirdly*, in the light of Church of England teaching.

I. *First*, what saith the Scripture in regard to the faithful departed ? Let us remember our text. Where Scripture is silent we must not draw the veil. But “ the things which are revealed belong unto us.” And much is revealed on this great subject of which we may thankfully remind ourselves.

The Scriptures plainly assert regarding departed believers :

I. *That they live*.—“ Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die ” (John xi. 26).

¹ This sermon is limited to this one phase of the question.

2. *That they are with Christ.*—"Absent from the body . . . present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8). "To depart is to "be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23).

3. *That they are in conscious blessedness.*—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (Rev. xiv. 13). They are not in a state of unconscious sleep. The figure "sleep" is used in Holy Scripture of the body of the departed believer, not of his soul. That is in a state of "joy and felicity" (*Burial Service*). The Bible says: "To die is *gain*." "Very far better" is their condition of conscious bliss. Theirs is the perpetual "Sabbath rest" which remaineth for the people of God (Phil. i. 21, 23; Heb. iv, 9).

4. *That they are numbered among the "just men made perfect"* (Heb. xii. 23).

We must pause a moment here. One of the commonest arguments for reviving prayers for the dead is drawn from the very imperfect state in which many true Christians die. They are evidently, it is said, full of inconsistencies. They are true at heart, but not fit for Christ's presence. These defects, it is argued, must be remedied by some discipline hereafter. Do they not, therefore, still need our prayers?

This plea is not according to Scripture. Consider the case of believers who will be alive at the second coming of our Lord. Will not the Church on earth in that day include many who are equally sin-stained and imperfect?

Apply the same argument to those believers who are among the "quick" at Christ's advent, and its fallacy appears at once.

The Scriptures distinctly tell us that their glorification will be instantaneous if they be Christ's indeed. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye . . . we shall be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 52.)

So it is with the dead in Christ. The moment the soul of a believer is delivered from the burden of the flesh, "in the twinkling of an eye," shall not it too be changed,

purged of all its imperfections by the Spirit's power, and through the wondrous efficacy of Christ's atonement fitted for the presence of the Lord? Was it not so with the penitent robber? Was it not so with St. Stephen? Was not his spirit received (and therefore perfected) by the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God? And when the Lord Jesus comes again, the bodies of His saints shall be in like manner perfected "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"; and, redeemed thus in each part of their complex nature, they shall be like, and with, their Lord.

Following thus where Scripture leads, we are not free to hold that the state of a departed believer is one of unconsciousness, or of probation, or of purgation, or of imperfection so far as regards the capacity of the ransomed spirit, though he waits still for the redemption of the body in the day of Christ's appearing.

Where, then, is there room for prayer? For *praise* there is abundant scope. With deepest fervour, with abounding gratitude, we bless God's Holy Name, day by day and week by week, for all His servants "departed this life in His faith and fear." How does St. Paul comfort the Thessalonians concerning "them that are asleep"? Does he commend them to their prayers? No such thing. Read the passage in 1 Thess. iv. He does not say, "Take comfort in praying for them." He does bid them comfort one another by contemplating what the Lord has revealed of their present and future blessedness. So with ourselves. By faith we can mount upwards and realize their bliss till we almost seem to have a share in it. They have joined the other half, the heavenly section, of the one family in heaven and in earth, and the more we contemplate their blessedness the more we are ourselves drawn upwards in love and faith and hope and zeal. For praise, then, I say there is abundant scope, but if Holy Scripture is to guide us, there is no room for prayer.

Nay, the Bible seems to imply that prayer for the departed is not without peril to the interests of the living,

for whom we *are* taught to pray. We pray for the living saints that they may "redeem the time." But is there not much risk lest some infer from this practice of praying for the dead that it will not be too late in the future state for those defects to be remedied which it is our duty to see to here and now? Why does Christ say, "The night cometh *when no man can work*"? Why does St. Paul speak of judgment in the future state being ruled by things "*done in the body*," not by probation effected in the disembodied state?

Again, if Scripture be followed, does not such a practice seem to be dishonouring to the Lord Jesus? Can we not trust Him to take care of the ransomed soul bought by His own precious Blood, even after it has entered His blessed presence, and been brought home on His shoulders rejoicing?

I have too much respect for your intelligence to refer to St. Paul's words regarding Onesiphorus. They can have no bearing on the question, unless it can be shown that Onesiphorus was dead when the Second Epistle to Timothy was written. Of this there is no evidence whatever.

So far we have been confining our attention to "the things which are revealed" upon this important subject. We shall not, I think, hesitate to conclude that the practice of prayers for the dead has no support whatever in, but is, on the contrary, opposed to, the teaching of Holy Scripture.

II. We pass on now to consider the practice in the *light of Church History*.

Just as there is absolute silence on the subject in "the things which are revealed," so there is no mention of prayers for the dead in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, nor in the earliest¹ of all the Christian liturgies, nor in the remarkable description, in Justin Martyr's first

¹ The Alexandrian Ritual, preserved in the "Apostolic Constitutions."

"Apology," of the Celebration of the Eucharist in his day.

It is only from the beginning of the third century that we trace, in liturgies and other writings, the gradual development of the practice. A painful history it is. It is an object-lesson to thoughtful men on the importance of the old rule, *Obsta principiis*.

1. It began, we find, with a general petition for all God's saints ("prophets, apostles, martyrs . . . and every spirit perfected in the faith of Christ") that they might have "repose," "light," "rest," "refreshment," and "share in the first resurrection."

2. At a later date we meet with prayers for the not very bad; then for the whole world of the dead, except the martyrs; these it was argued, should rather pray for us.

3. Thus prayers *for* the dead led on to prayers *to* the dead, and so developed the terrible and God-dishonouring heresy of the invocation of saints.

4. Then followed, step by step, century by century, in gradual succession, all from the same source, a triad of religious impostures which have sapped, wherever they have prevailed, the very foundations of religion—purgatory, masses for the dead, and indulgences.

It is a terrible story. Lest one unguarded expression should escape me if I used my own words, let me borrow the language of one of the most learned, cautious, and accurate of men, the revered Bishop Ellicott of Gloucester. In a volume of sermons entitled "The Destiny of the Creature," preached before the University of Cambridge (third edition, 1863, page 141), he writes:

"No calm student of antiquity can fail to observe that the practice of praying for the dead had ever a distinct tendency to dangerous progressions and developments. We first meet with commemorations in which *communion in faith* was the thing mainly dwelt upon, and the blessed and salutary teaching of example the end proposed. We next meet with distinct intercessory prayers, yet only for the holy

dead, and in language of restrained and edifying simplicity. A step onward leads us to compassionate extensions of prayer for those whose state is doubtful; a step further, and we observe a lapse into prayers even for the reprobate, and we begin to meet with melancholy ideas of short-lived consolations that it was possible to supply to those in anticipatory torment. We soon hear the not unreasonable protests of Aerius; and we find ourselves, amid doubtful language even from Catholic Fathers, drifting into morbid hopes and self-interested superstitions; and at last, silently, yet surely, borne onward into the resuscitated paganism of Purgatory, and into all the frightful abuses which that perverted doctrine imported into the Church of Christ."

Such is the light which history throws upon a practice which some are making great efforts to revive among us.

III. Let us proceed to view the matter in *the light of our Church's formularies*.

Our Reformers had before them, as we have, the light of Scripture and the light of history. Let us carefully note the conclusions which they drew from these premises. Let us remember, in doing so, two things: first, that they were learned and scholarly, as well as godly, men; next, that their conclusions on such subjects cost them something; they maintained them at the peril of their lives.

How did they deal with this subject?

1. They began by discarding all the medieval developments. They went back to third century usage. The first Prayer-Book contained prayers for the faithful dead in the Communion Office and in the Burial Service. This is the kind of petition then used:

"Grant them . . . Thy mercy and everlasting peace, and that at the day of the general resurrection we and they . . . may be set on Christ's right hand."

2. But three years later, in the Second Prayer-Book, such prayers were altogether discarded. Our Reformers went higher up the stream, and drew pure water from its very source. They went back further than the third century, back to primitive and apostolic days, back to the Scriptures of truth, to which they made their ultimate appeal.

A century later some attempt was made to revert to the earlier arrangement, but it signally failed. Convocation rejected the proposal, and the only change then sanctioned was one distinctly in the right direction : *praise for the departed*, for which there is every Scripture warrant, found expression in the beautiful words of the prayer for Christ's Church *militant here on earth* :

"We also bless Thy Holy Name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear, beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples that with them we may be partakers of Thy everlasting kingdom."

We pass from the "Manual of Prayer" to the "Manual of Preaching," and we find language which is abundantly clear in the third part of the Homily on Prayer :

"Now to entreat of that question whether we ought to pray for them that are departed out of this world or no. Wherein, if we will cleave only unto the Word of God then must we needs grant, that we have no commandment so to do. . . . We must take heed that we call upon this Advocate while we have space given us in this life, lest when we are once dead, there be no hope of salvation left unto us. . . . Let us not therefore dream either of purgatory, or of prayer for the souls of them that be dead."

The position of the Church of England in reference to prayer for the faithful departed is therefore unmistakably plain :

1. In her "Manual of Prayer" she has deliberately struck out from her services all such prayers, and she has consistently refused to re-admit them.

2. She has in her "Manual of Preaching" put into the mouths of her ministers a distinct repudiation of the practice.

3. She has emphasized praise for the faithful departed in her Eucharistic Service as the Scriptural form of commemoration.

Let us praise God for the courage, wisdom, and fidelity given to the compilers of our Book of Common Prayer. They showed courage in what they omitted and courage in what they retained. They were bold in striking out all *prayers* for the faithful departed. They were bold in retaining, in connection with the Sacrament of the Supper of our Lord, that beautiful *thanksgiving* for those who sleep in Jesus, which, as a true memorial, knits us with them in mind and memory, in communion and fellowship in the mystical Body of Christ.

Let us be loyal Churchmen in this matter. Let us put aside all attempts to get behind our Church's teaching. This teaching no one can mistake. Openness, as Archbishop Benson pointed out, has been one of her main characteristics. She has been perfectly open here. It is not true that she has left prayers for the dead an undecided question; she has struck them out; and loyal Churchmen will thankfully and reverently respect her decision, having duly weighed it, according to her own instructions, in the balance of Holy Scripture.

Let us remember, after all, that there is one petition which the Lord Himself has taught us, which has a most real and blessed bearing on the future of the saints at rest—"Thy kingdom come." "That it may please Thee of Thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom." This is a lawful, Scriptural, and most comfortable prayer. If each time we think of loved ones gone before we carry our minds forward to "the blessed hope and the glorious appearing" when, "soul and body re-united," each ransomed saint in particular, and the triumphant Church

in general, shall be presented perfect in body, soul, and spirit before the Lord, then will the pent-up longings of the Church militant find expression and relief in the closing words of the Book of Truth, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

But in respect to all attempts, open or secret, such as are now being made to revive amongst us prayers for the dead in any form, let us lay to heart the wise words of the Bishop of Gloucester in the volume already quoted, page 143 :

"To approach the throne of grace with supplications in behalf of what is unknown, uncertain, or irreversible, is fearfully to offend the eternal majesty of God, and to do daring violence to the true nature and essence of prayer."

V

THE NATURE OF A SACRAMENT

“ Q. What meanest thou by this word Sacrament ? ”

“ A. I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.”

CHURCH OF ENGLAND CATECHISM.

“ Hold fast the form of sound words.”—2 TIM. i. 13.

EACH of one of the four “ Church questions ” already examined has a sacramental bearing. This is manifestly true of the first and of the second. The third is closely connected with the warning exhortation, and the fourth with the prayer for the Church militant, both of which form part of the order for the administration of the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion. And this is true of many other “ Church questions ” which are occupying men’s minds at this time.

One of the arguments which our Church applies to the heresy of transubstantiation in her Twenty-eighth Article is : “ It overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament.”

I propose, therefore, to examine to-day the teaching of the Church of England as to the “ nature of a Sacrament.” If we have clearly before us what a Sacrament is and what it is not, according to our Church’s definition, we shall, if I mistake not, detect much in the reactionary doctrine and practice now so assiduously advocated which is quite inconsistent with this definition, and in its light the said doctrines and practices will stand, therefore, self-condemned.

The word "Sacrament" is not found in Scripture, so that we can form no judgment on sacramental doctrine until we have defined carefully the sense in which the word is used in our Formularies.

What, then, does our Church mean by "the nature of a Sacrament"?

It was the object of special solicitude with our Reformers to restore the Scriptural and Apostolic conception of this great subject in all its fulness and completeness.

We hear it said sometimes that our reformed Prayer-Book contains only a minimum of sacramental teaching, and that it must be supplemented from other sources if we would get at the whole truth. Our Church expressly repudiates any such view. In her Fifty-seventh Canon she expressly says that :

"The doctrine both of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper is so sufficiently set down in the Book of Common Prayer to be used at the administration of the said Sacraments, as nothing can be added unto it that is material and necessary."

According to our Church's teaching "the nature of a Sacrament" involves the five following points :

First, a Sacrament is distinguished from many another holy thing in that it has two parts, distinct and separate: one part is outward and visible, the other inward and spiritual; the outward and visible being a sign of the inward and spiritual. If duly used, it is an effectual sign—that is, it is a means whereby we receive the same. God can and does use other means. Our Catechism does not say "*the* means," but "*a* means whereby we receive the same and a pledge to assure us thereof." The inward and spiritual grace is not tied to the outward and visible sign. Each part may be had apart from the other. Judas Iscariot and Simon Magus received the sign without the grace. The penitent robber and many another has received the grace without the sign (see page 10). We see now why transubstantiation overthrows the nature of a Sacrament. It practically reduces the two parts to one, and makes

the substance of what is outward and visible to be actually changed into the substance of that which is inward and spiritual.

Secondly, this symbolism is a Divine ordinance, and this in two senses :

(a) The outward and visible sign must be ordained by Christ Himself. It is not enough that the symbolism be fitting and beautiful, a happy conceit of holy minds, as, for instance, the ring in marriage, or the laying on of hands in Confirmation. You will have noted the frequency with which this word "ordained"—"ordained by God," "ordained by Christ"—is used in regard to the outward sign, both in the Articles and in the Catechism. It is "Christ's institution and promise" that makes that particular outward and visible object, when used as He directed, an *effectual* sign of the inward and spiritual grace signified thereby. That is why, although there are many sacred things, there are only two Sacraments of the Gospel. It is important to remember that the other five which Rome recognizes as truly and properly Sacraments have no visible sign or ceremony ordained by Christ. So far from it, it was not till the twelfth century after Christ that the doctrine which connects the number seven with the Sacraments was first formulated, and it was not till the sixteenth century that it was made an Article of Faith.

(b) And not only so, but the use of the symbolism is also of Divine appointment. It is not optional. The command is clear : "Take, eat" ; "Drink ye all of this" ; "This do in remembrance of Me" ; "Go ye, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." It is plain command, not to be neglected wherever it can be obeyed. It is presumption to expect to be partakers of the same grace by other means when we wilfully or carelessly neglect to participate in one special means which we own that Christ Himself ordained.

This is a second and most important element in what our Church calls "the nature of a Sacrament."

Thirdly, it appertains to "the nature of a Sacrament" that the outward and visible sign must be *given, taken, and received*. It was so at the first. We are expressly told that Jesus said, "*Drink ye all of it*" (Matt. xxvi. 27); and St. Mark adds with equal care, "*They all drank of it*" (Mark. xiv. 23). Justin Martyr thus describes the custom of the Primitive Church: "After the consecration, the bread and wine that have been blessed are *given to everyone* that is present." (See Bishop Chr. Wordsworth, "Miscellanies," p. 156). The "outward visible sign" ordained by Christ Himself must be received. It is not water only, but water *in which the person is baptized* which is the "outward visible sign" or form in Baptism. It is not bread and wine only, but "bread and wine, *which the Lord hath commanded to be received*" which is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper. The Articles convey the same teaching. It is to "such as rightly, worthily, and by faith, *receive* the same" that the bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing a partaking of the Blood of Christ. "In such only as worthily *receive* the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation" (Articles XXV., XXVIII.). It is not the consecration, but the partaking, which gives to the outward sign its sacramental character. This is no Zwinglian exaggeration. Hooker taught it.¹ The High Churchmen of the Caroline period taught it:

"We deny that the elements still retain the nature of Sacraments when not used according to Divine institution—that is, *given* by Christ's ministers, and *received* by His people." (Bishop Cosin, "History of Transubstantiation," p. 60.)

The very words of Christ teach us this. He does not say, "This is My Body; take, eat." He says, *Take, eat*, this is My Body which is being given for you."

Fourthly, there must not only be reception, but reception with repentance, faith, love, and praise. There

¹ See quotation on p. 16.

is something "required of" persons receiving either Sacrament. Nothing can be clearer than our Church's teaching in this respect. To those who with true penitent heart and lively faith receive the bread and wine they are indeed "sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace." Such spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ, and drink His Blood; they dwell in Christ, and Christ in them; they are one with Christ, and Christ with them. But it is said not only of the wicked, but of "such as be void of a lively faith," that although they partake of the "outward and visible sign," yet "in no wise are they partakers of Christ." To quote the precise words of the Twenty-eighth Article :

"The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith."

Fifthly, an important element in "the nature of a Sacrament" is its congregational or corporate aspect. We see this in both Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Each is an exhibition before all men of fellowship, communion in the Body of Christ. Each is a public, not a private, ordinance, to be administered publicly, and not privately, save only in exceptional cases.

This is obviously true of Holy Baptism. It is to be administered "when the most number of people come together" "for that the congregation may testify the receiving of them that be newly baptized into the number of Christ's Church." It has been called the "Sacrament of Incorporation." The newly-baptized is received "into the congregation of Christ's flock"; is "regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church" (no stop after "regenerate"); admitted into the fellowship of "faithful and elect children."

And this is equally true of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It has a second name which particularly sets forth this truth; it is "the Holy Communion." Fellowship is one thought which pervades the ordinance.

Our Church is very strict on this point. Only in one most exceptional case—in the time of the plague, sweat, etc., upon special request of the diseased—may the minister alone communicate with any member of his flock (last rubric in “the Communion of the Sick”), and then only because “none of the parish or neighbours can be gotten . . . for fear of the infection.” Otherwise not even in a sick case does our Church allow the Lord’s Supper to be administered unless there be two at the least (besides the minister) to communicate with the sick person. And why? Because it is a Holy Communion, not only of each believing soul with the Saviour, but of each believing soul with the rest. What else does St. Paul mean when he writes to the Corinthians? (I Cor. x. 14-17, R.V.):

“Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread.”

Or, as the last clause is translated by Waterland:

“For since the bread is one, we being many, are one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

The feast of the Lord’s Supper is (Art. XXVIII.) “a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another.” It is the family meal. The Holy Table is “the Lord’s Board.” The children who participate in faith are assured thereby that they “are very members incorporate in the mystical Body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.” This second and derived sense in which the phrase “the Body of Christ” is used in the Lord’s Supper is too often left out of account.

This fifth and last element is of the very essence of the institution.

Before we pass on, let me remind you that our Church is at pains to cover both Sacraments with one and the same definition.

There are twelve questions in the sacramental part of the Catechism. Of these the first three apply to both Sacraments ; the next three are repeated in respect of each Sacrament, leaving only three out of the twelve which apply to one Sacrament only and not to the other.

So in the Thirty-nine Articles. Before we reach the Articles which deal separately with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, we have a long Article in four paragraphs, applying equally to both Sacraments, and showing how both are defined by the same careful language, and governed by the same essential principles. We cannot, therefore, rightly predicate of one Sacrament what will not hold equally of the other. It will be seen that the application of this simple rule at once convicts many forms of teaching as being inconsistent and false. Who would venture to maintain that the Holy Spirit descends into the water used in Holy Baptism ? Who would assert in the face of Art. XXIX. that such as are void of a lively faith are partakers of the spiritual grace of the Lord's Supper ?

Let us then keep in mind, and ready for use, these five elements which go to make up "the nature of a Sacrament."

Let us now simply enumerate them, and then proceed to apply them. We have seen

(a) That a Sacrament must consist of two distinct parts—an outward sign, symbolizing an inward grace, and that these two parts are not to be confounded or identified.

(b) That the symbolism must be "ordained by Christ Himself," and used as commanded by Him.

(c) That the outward and visible sign must be "given unto us" and received by us rightly, worthily, and by faith.

(d) That when thus given unto us, and received by us with true penitent heart and lively faith, it becomes to us a means whereby we are made partakers of the inward and spiritual grace which it symbolizes.

(e) That the Sacraments have been ordained by Christ "in His Church," and their congregational character as Sacraments of fellowship is of the very essence of their institution.

The application of these principles need not detain us long.

The first condemns all theories regarding the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper which confound together the two separate parts, which mix up the inward and spiritual grace with the outward and visible sign, whether transubstantiation or consubstantiation, or any like sacramental conception.

The second condemns the addition of any other rites, however sacred and solemn, to the list of what our Church calls "Sacraments of the Gospel," for this simple reason :

"They have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God" (Art. XXV.).

The third exposes the fallacy of what is called "non-communicating attendance," or "assisting" at the Holy Communion without participation. It is worse than a fallacy ; it degrades one of the most sacred of all the means of grace. It is impossible to read the office for the administration of the Lord's Supper from the exhortation onwards without seeing that the whole service implies in almost every sentence that those who use it are communicants. The following extracts on the subject will justify the strength of my language. They are all from Divinity Professors in one or other of our older universities.

Dr. Ince, Regius Professor of Divinity, Oxford :

"The practice of non-communicating attendance

at the Holy Sacrament has always appeared to me utterly unscriptural and unprimitive."

The late Dr. Swainson, Margaret Professor, Cambridge :

" I need not go into the question of what I am much disposed to call this act of disobedience and profanation."

The late lamented Professor Hort writes :

" To the best of my knowledge there is no evidence for the practice of non-communicating attendance in at least the first four centuries, except as a penal privation inflicted on one class of penitents, or as a popular abuse rebuked by authority."

The late Professor Heurtley of Oxford writes :

" I have no hesitation in saying that non-communicating attendance has no warrant in Scripture, no countenance in the Early Church, no sanction from the Church of England."

The Church's own mind is clearly expressed in our Homily, which speaks of the Sacrament as

" His heavenly supper, where every one of us must be guests and not gazers, eaters and not lookers, feeding ourselves and not having others to feed us."

The fourth of our principles underlies the " Church question " considered in the first of these sermons.

The last of them condemns solitary Masses and justifies the strict means which our Church takes to prohibit them.

It is much to be regretted that the sacramental doctrine of the Church of England is so little understood. We ought to prize it. It is a blood-bought heritage. Those who have studied the treatises and correspondence of Archbishop Cranmer, Bishop Ridley, and others of our Reformers on the Lord's Supper know something of the mental and spiritual travail through which they must have passed on this great subject before they found

at last a sure footing on the basis of Scriptural and primitive truth.

I earnestly invite the attention of ministers, parents, and teachers, to this matter. Why is it we see our young people so often led astray by Romish or semi-Romish sacramental teaching? It is because in so many cases the mind is found to be a vacuum on this great subject. No pains have been taken to keep out the false by filling in the true.

“Hold fast the form of sound words.” Study yourselves and teach your children what God did for us in the sixteenth century: how He vindicated His truth in our midst and gave us, in our Liturgy, Articles, and other formularies, a source of sacramental teaching quite clearly defined and complete, and not clearly defined only, but Scriptural, reasonable, satisfying, and true.

God grant that one issue of our present peril may be a fuller realization of parental responsibility as to the religious training of our children! Our formularies are, of course, some three centuries and a half old, and they need explanation. They are often condensed in style and language, and require some simplification. But the wise parent and teacher will not grudge the time and thought necessary to make the subject full of interest to the children; and if this be the rule, then our hearts will be gladdened as we see rising up among us a generation of brave young Churchmen who are ready “to play the man” and to hand on to those who come after them the candle which by the grace of God they are resolved “shall never be put out” in our land.

VI

THE HOUR OF ADMINISTRATION

"I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread; . . . In like manner also the cup, after supper . . ."—ST. PAUL.

"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."—GAL. V. I.

FROM the first there has been a struggle in the Church between liberty and bondage, truth and error, the commandment of God and the traditions of men.

In Apostolic days this was seen in the conflict between St. Paul and the Judaizers, or between St. John and the Gnostics, and so it went on. In the fourth century its character somewhat changed.

What we are wont to call the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity was to a large extent a dilution of Christianity by Paganism. The Church began to be leavened with sacerdotal views of distinctly Pagan origin, unknown¹ during the earlier period of its existence.

This sacerdotalism found its fuller development, some centuries later, in the Papal system. St. Paul had spoken of it as the "mystery of lawlessness" already working in his day, long before its fuller development was reached; and it works still, even among many who disclaim all allegiance to the Papacy; and so it will work to the end.

¹ Bishop Lightfoot, "Epistle to the Philippians," p. 259.

Its tendency is, as Daniel long ago predicted, "to change times and laws" (Dan. vii. 25). It alters what God has ordained. It sanctions what God forbids. It forbids what Christ has sanctioned. It abridges the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. It imposes arbitrary restrictions which find no warrant in His Word.

To this source most of the medieval errors and most of our present controversies are to be ultimately traced.

It is to one of these restrictions I call your attention to-day. We are told that the Holy Communion ought only to be received at an early hour in the morning. It is well therefore that we should look carefully into the question, Is there any particular time of the day exclusively proper to its administering?

I. We turn to *our Bibles* for an answer. Regarding the hour of the Paschal Feast, the precursor of the Holy Supper, the Old Testament gives plain directions. The language is quite unmistakable: "In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it." This command is thrice given (Exod. xii. 6, Lev. xxiii. 5, Numb. ix. 3). In the Hebrew the time is even more precisely fixed: "between the two evenings." At this time, of course, it was that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted.

We turn to the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles of the New Testament. We find in the First Epistle to the Corinthians special mention of the Lord's Supper. This letter was written about a quarter of a century after the institution. Of course St. Paul was not present at the Last Supper. He was not then converted. Our Lord therefore revealed to him what took place, that he might not be behind the chiefest of those who were actually present at the Feast. St. Paul was thus able to give inspired teaching to the Churches on this subject. Notwithstanding this, the Corinthian convert, after his eighteen months' stay among them, allowed serious

abuses to creep into their Church in connection with this Sacrament. These St. Paul sharply rebukes in his first Epistle. He repeats in his letter what he had received of the Lord by revelation. He had delivered it to them orally in his teaching. He now commits it to them in writing. It is to be noted that although the abuses were largely in connection with other food taken at the same time as "the breaking of bread," he does not correct them by prescribing any rules as to the time of reception, but simply reminds the Corinthians that it was "in the same *night* in which He was betrayed that Christ took bread and instituted the Holy Supper, also that it was *after supper* He took the cup." This passage is of special interest to us as members of the Church of England, as in our Consecration Prayer the words of institution are taken from this Epistle of St. Paul.

We notice, further, that after this Epistle had been written St. Paul at Troas assembled with the Christians who were "gathered together to break bread" *on the evening* of the first day of the week.

And yet in no part of the New Testament do we find St. Paul or any other inspired writer laying down any rule as to the time of administration. They might have said: "Remember the old Paschal law. Note how our Lord observed it. Be careful to observe it still. See that the Lord's Supper is ever, as at first, an evening feast, betokening a blessed Supper when the day of toil is done." Or they might have said: "Take warning from the Church of Corinth. See how soon abuses may creep in. Keep on the safe side. Beware of administering late in the day, after the ordinary meals."

In no part of the New Testament can any rule be found affecting the question beyond the three inspired rubrics which were given to the very Church in which these abuses had occurred, and which still govern all Christian worship:

"Let all things be done unto edifying."

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

“Let all that ye do be done in love.”

It is much to be noted that on this subject, where some direction might reasonably have been looked for, none is given. There is no rule of any kind in any part of the New Testament as to the time of day at which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is to be administered. The Holy Spirit leaves the Church absolutely and entirely free. This liberty is part of a precious heritage. In the absence of any law on the subject plainly laid down under Art. XXXIV. by the “particular or National Church,” to which our obedience is due, we must on no account surrender this God-given liberty. The silence of our Church on the matter will be considered in the third division of our subject.

2. We turn to the *practice of the Church* in its earliest days. One¹ of our ablest Church historians writes :

“In the apostolic age the administration of the Eucharist took place in the evening, after the pattern of its original institution.”

There can be no dispute as to this fact. The bishops of the province of Canterbury, so lately as 1893, adopted a report which began as follows :

“In the Apostolic age the Holy Communion was administered in connection with the gathering of Christians to share the appointed evening meal.”

This was the primitive usage, which, in the absence of any direction on the subject, seems to have been generally adopted. Yet was there no thought of abridging the liberty, of excluding any other hour. So far from it, in the second century we note a gradual change of practice. The early morning hour is preferred as the time of administration, and from the fourth century onwards it becomes the recognized time, though not without exceptions. We are not sure what led to the change.

¹ Canon J. C. Robertson, “History of the Christian Church,” 3rd edition, p. 171.

Some ascribe it to imperial edicts against evening gatherings ; some to the separation of the Lord's Supper from the Love Feast or Agape ; some to the desire to commemorate the resurrection of our Lord. We cannot tell with certainty the motive. So it was ; so it continued, practically, though not universally, from the fourth century till the Reformation.

3. We take up *our Prayer-Books*. What did our Reformers do ? They might have said : " This early celebration must be forbidden. We see no trace of it in the Bible. It has been associated with the idolatry of the Mass. We will revert to the practice of Apostolic days." Or they might have said : " We will still enjoin the early administration, as in time past. It was within the Church's liberty to make the change. It has no necessary connection with the evils of the past. It shall be still our rule." What did they do ?

In this, as in so much else, they turned for direction to the sacred page. What saith the Scripture ? The answer was clear. Absolute liberty as to the hour of administration is left us by the Lord and His apostles. Absolute liberty, said our Reformers in effect, shall characterize in like manner the Catholic Church of England.

They seem to have been particularly careful on this point. In the First Prayer-Book the service for the Communion of the Sick contained a rubric that the curate should celebrate in the sick-room " afore noon." But three years after, in the Second Prayer-Book, even this very general direction was struck out. Why ? Can we doubt the reason ? What could it have been but that the Church declined to fetter in any way the absolute liberty of her clergy in the absence of any inspired direction on the subject ? At any hour, day or night, as the needs of the sick require, the little company may assemble round the bedside to commemorate

the Saviour's dying love, and feed on Him, in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

But how, as a matter of fact, was this discretion used? What was the prevailing custom? Does our liturgy throw any light upon this subject? There can be no doubt it does. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was usually administered *after Morning Prayer*. The Prayer-Book illustrates this. There are certain Sundays and Holy days when the Gospel, which, of course, forms part of the Communion Service, is taken from the same chapter as the Second Lesson. This is the case on Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Monday, St. Thomas's Day. Now in every one of these cases the portion chosen for the Gospel follows after the portion selected for the Second Lesson. It was taken for granted that the Morning Prayer, in which the Second Lesson occurs, would precede the Communion Office, in which the Gospel is read.

That this was the arrangement in the mind of our Reformers there can be no doubt. The very order in which the services stand in the Prayer-Book confirms this. And as a matter of fact from the sixteenth till the nineteenth century it was the prevailing custom in the English Church to administer the Sacrament after Morning Prayer, at the principal service on the Lord's Day, the time of administration being thus within about an hour of noon. Still, this was custom, not law. There was no direction of any kind regarding it. It was determined by considerations of general convenience.

Thus it was till the nineteenth century, which was marked, as we all know, by an enormous strain on the resources of our Church. The vast increase of population, which in many parts arose as if by magic, taxed to the utmost, not only the ecclesiastical, but the physical and mental, resources of the parochial clergy. Many new methods were introduced, all in the teeth of strong opposition, greatly to the scandal of many worthy souls.

Evening services were commenced ; hymns were sung ; lay agency was employed. None of these things were forbidden. They were all, and had always been, within the discretion of the clergy, who only used their liberty for the glory of God. No change of doctrine was so much as dreamed of. Earnest pastors exercised in these ways a holy ingenuity in the discharge of their responsibility to feed "so great a multitude." And they applied the same principle to the hour of administration. They had already established evening services to meet the needs of those who could worship at no other time. They now found it needful to exercise their liberty in regard to the hour of administration. They saw that many could not communicate after Morning Prayer. They dare not deprive their people of this most precious means of grace when it was within their liberty to meet their need. Some could come early in the morning ; for them an additional administration was fixed at that hour. Some could come only in the evening ; their need was met in like manner. So far from their being any thought of doctrine involved in either change, it was a leading High Churchman who is believed to have been among the first to introduce evening Communion, as it was leading Evangelical Churchmen who are said to have introduced into our parish churches the early hour of administration.

This exercise of liberty has been attended with the best results. It has continued to this day.

But this our liberty is now challenged. A new school has risen up among us, holding doctrines unknown in our Church since the Reformation, which would fain impose early morning Communion upon us as a necessity, discouraging mid-day administrations (I do not say "mid-day celebrations"), and forbidding evening Communion as unholy and wrong.

And when we ask on what grounds this abridgment of our liberty is demanded, what is said in reply ? The

new teachers do not appeal to the Bible. They do not quote the Prayer-Book. They do not rely on the example of the Primitive Church. Nay, they admit the practice of those early days. I quote one of them :

“ We have, I hope, got beyond the notion that the Early Church objected to afternoon and evening Communion. The Early Church in no sort of way objected to evening celebrations *per se*. She celebrated continually in the afternoon or evening.”

The reply is that the Communion should be received fasting, and therefore, because people could not fast till mid-day or evening, it should be received in the early morning.

And why should the Communion be received fasting ? Did our blessed Lord set this example ? Did He not institute the Holy Supper at, and in connection with, a meal ? Was it not, as our consecration prayer reminds us, “ *after supper* He took the cup ” ?

Press this point home and we come to this : fasting Communion is a corollary of transubstantiation or consubstantiation. The argument is this : the Body and Blood of Christ are in, with, or under the forms of bread and wine which are received into the mouth. This food therefore should not be allowed to mix with other food in the stomach.

What a fearful degradation of the Holy Sacrament is this ! The late Bishop Samuel Wilberforce said regarding it :

“ It is a detestable materialism. Philosophically it is a contradiction, because, when the celebration is over, you may hurry away to a meal, and the process about which you were so scrupulous immediately follows.”

Fasting Communion thus insisted on is a corollary of transubstantiation or consubstantiation, and non-communicating attendance is a corollary of fasting Communion.

And thus the Feast of the Lord is turned into a fast,

because there are those now who, like the Pharisees of old, persist in "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

So far is this reaction carried that some even dare to say that it is better not to come to the Sacrament at all than not to come fasting.

I quote the following from a tract entitled, "Ought I to communicate fasting?" of which several thousands have been circulated:

"But sometimes (persons) find that they are unable to go fasting every week, or on some particular Sunday. What is to be done, then? The Church of England only requires of obligation three Communion~~s~~s in the year. Fasting Communion is a rule of the Church, but frequent Communion is not."

Of what Church is it the rule? Clearly not of the Church of England.

Let me earnestly exhort all loyal Churchmen to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. Many who have begun by surrendering their freedom in this matter have found themselves on an inclined plane, and have been carried on and on from one error to another until it has been well nigh too late to recover their ground.

There is, to be sure, one rule to guide us as to the hour of administration, the inspired rule—"Let all things be done unto edifying." What does experience teach me is most for my edifying and the edifying of the household committed to my care?

There are some who find they are drawn nearer to Christ in His blessed Feast if they come in the early morning, making it the first occupation and the first food of the day. They are free to come, but they are not free to assume that what is for their edification is what others find most helpful.

There are some who find it more to edification to spend

the early Sabbath hours in their closets or in family devotion, and to reserve to the mid-day season the approach to the table of the Lord ; let them rejoice in the privilege of making this blessed service their central Sabbath occupation. Let them prepare for it by the early morning spent in secret prayer and study of the work and by the common prayer with the great congregation in the services of God's house.

There are others whose calling in life makes the evening the only possible time for them to communicate, and who (for this is the main point) find it is "unto edifying" to communicate in the evening. Let them hold fast their liberty, and with all modesty meet the cavils of those who blame them because they dare to follow where our Lord and His Apostles led the way.

"Let all things be done unto edifying ;" "With freedom did Christ set us free : stand fast therefore and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."

I have now explained the reason why the hour of administration, which seems to be in itself a trivial thing, finds a place in this selection of "Church Questions" which we have been considering.

For ourselves let us, as our Homily exhorts us (quoting from St. Cyprian),

"Cleave fast to the first beginning, hold fast the Lord's tradition, do that in the Lord's commemoration which He Himself did, He Himself commanded, and His Apostles confirmed."

Then shall we be true and faithful sons of our Mother Church.

A persistent and skilfully conceived attempt is being made to entangle us again in the yoke of bondage which our fathers so boldly and at such a cost shook off. Be it ours in so grave a crisis to pray continually for our beloved Church—yes, and for our country, too.

Nothing will tend more to sap and undermine the

manhood of our land and the prosperity of our nation than the revival of these medieval superstitions.

On the other hand, nothing will tend more to promote England's true welfare, domestic, moral, religious, social and political, than the revival in her midst of the old spirit of Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer in a generation of men and women who, by God's grace, study diligently, see clearly, appropriate personally, maintain firmly, and defend fearlessly, the faith of the Gospel "which was once for all delivered to the saints."

THE END.

